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Washington, D.C. -- The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that the agency will fund a series of innovative projects that will use telemedicine to enhance the home care of paralyzed veterans.

The VA's new Telemedicine in Home Care projects will be based in 15 special spinal cord injury/dysfunction (SCI/D) centers located at VA medical centers in 11 states, and will serve veterans throughout the nation. More than \$500,000 has been earmarked for this initiative.

According to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West Jr., the projects help demonstrate how a relatively low-cost new technology can be used to significantly improve care of some of the most medically fragile and complicated patients VA serves. "No other health-care system in the nation has used telemedicine for home care to the extent that VA is now doing," Secretary West said.

The primary objective of the VA Telemedicine in Home Care program is to enhance the timely access and quality of care for patients who have spinal cord injury and who are transitioning from hospital to home care.

Said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, "Telemedicine is rapidly demonstrating its usefulness in enhancing care because it enables the practice of medicine independent of geographic boundaries."

The Telemedicine in Home Care projects are the latest in a series of measures VA has implemented in recent years that have significantly improved the care of paralyzed veterans.

The project awards are being made to the following VA Medical Centers:

- Albuquerque, N.M.
- Augusta, Ga.
- Brockton/West Roxbury, Mass.
- *Bronx, N.Y.
- Cincinnati, Ohio
- Dallas, Tex.
- Hines, Ill.
- Long Beach, Calif.
- Memphis, Tenn.
- Milwaukee, Wis.
- Palo Alto, Calif.
- San Diego, Calif.
- Seattle, Wash.

* The Bronx VA Medical Center is the hub for three projects.